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Ronaldo with club president Musalli Al-Muammar | AFP

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BIG DEAL FOR RONALDO

Cristiano Ronaldo on Friday signed for Al Nassr of Saudi Arabia, the club announced, in a deal believed to be worth around $214 million per year till June 2025. A look at the mechanics of the deal...

PLAYING OUT OF EUROPE

The Portugal attacker will be playing in a league outside Europe for the first time. His contract at Man United was rescinded by the club after he gave an explosive pre-World Cup interview

RELUCTANT SHIFT

Driven by an ambition to stay in Europe and keep competing in Champions League, he didn't yet want to join a club outside Europe. He stated as much in that interview

RECORD MOVE TO DESERT

Considering his wages, it was always going to be a record-breaking deal. Only the richest clubs could take him on. At 200 mn euros a year (not counting loyalty bonus, signing on fees & appearance money), it will make him one of the highest-paid athletes in history of professional sport | P15

9 Al Nassr have won nine Saudi Arabian league titles

$214mn

RONALDO'S DEAL IS FOR SAID TO BE MORE THAN 200 MILLION EUROS PER YEAR

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HERE'S TO A FAB 2023!

After two years of muted celebrations, it was time for grand revelry in Bengaluru to usher in the New Year with joy and relief. (Above) A group clicks a selfie on Brigade Road on Saturday | VINOD KUMAR T

Huge undercurrent against BJP: Rahul

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THERE is a massive undercurrent against the BJP on the ground but Opposition parties will have to stand united to defeat it, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said on Saturday.

"There is a huge undercurrent on the ground and it will be difficult for BJP to win 2024. However, the Opposition has to coordinate properly and go to the people with an alternative vision," he said, adding the Congress will sweep the Madhya Pradesh elections.

Rahul claimed that all Opposition leaders are in support of the Congress though many of them might not join his Bharat Jodo Yatra due to political and other compulsions.

"I feel that both Akhilesh and Mayawati are against the idea of *nafrat ka Hindustan* (India of hatred), and they stand for *Mohabbat ka Hindustan* (India of love)," he said.

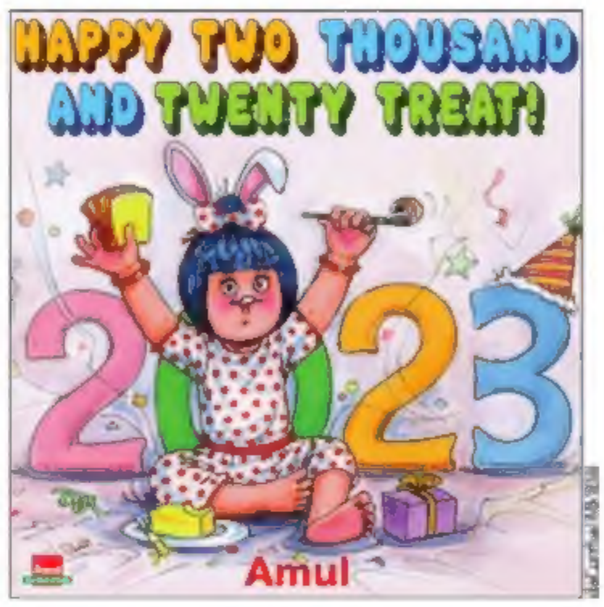
Parrying a question about him being the prime ministerial face of the Opposition for the 2024 elections, Rahul said his focus now is on uniting India.

"I don't fall for these types of questions. You can keep asking. My focus is on uniting the country," he said.

Indicating that the Congress can act as the fulcrum of Opposition unity ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Rahul said Congress alone can provide a central ideological framework at the national level, adding that regional parties cannot represent a vision for the country.

"To defeat the BJP, we need an ideology. If you look at SP, they don't have a national political thought. They have a position in UP and they have to defend it. Their line of politics wouldn't work in Kerala or Karnataka or Bihar," he said.

"There is a need for a central ideological framework and only Congress can provide that. That is our role. But our role is also to make the Opposition parties comfortable and to respect them. It's mutual," he added.



Intellectuals to Muslim youth: Join armed forces, serve nation

MOHAMMED YACOOB @ Bengaluru

SEVERAL Muslim organisations appealed to Muslims to make it a New Year resolution to encourage youngsters to join the armed forces. "We want one or two members of the community from every locality to join the armed forces and serve the nation. Career counselling during matriculation is also needed," Syed Tanveer Ahmed, national secretary, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) told *TNSE*. P2

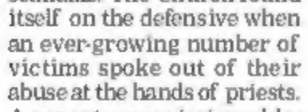
WHY LANGUAGE DIVERSITY MATTERS

SIR Herbert Risley, then British Home Secretary, wrote to Lord Curzon in December 1903 proposing the transfer of Chittagong, Dacca and Mymensingh divisions to Assam to allow for the reorganisation of the Bengal Presidency towards administrative efficiency. Not surprisingly, however, as questions of political reform and responsive government gained ground, provincial reorganisation soon got linked to the idea of culturally unified provinces. As a result, Bengal was proposed to be partitioned in 1905 into East Bengal and West Bengal. This created a stiff resistance from the people. A decade later, when the question of deciding on the defining principle for demarcating provinces was discussed in the Congress Session of 1917, Annie Besant strongly opposed religious segregation. In 1928 at the Lucknow Congress meeting, the committee to prepare a draft constitution headed by Motilal Nehru proposed that the free Indian state shall have no religion. It also adopted a resolution to permit the use of English along with Hindustani for the work of the Centre. Both these ideas found an honourable place in the Indian Constitution in 1949.

After Independence, though Jawaharlal Nehru accepted the principle of linguistic and cultural identity as the determining principle for state formation, he cautioned against excessive language pride becoming a threat to India's national unity. Andhra Pradesh became the first such linguistic state to be created in the wake of a violent popular agitation. In 1953, the State Reorganisation Commission was set up and SG Barve was deputed to the USSR to study the Russian experience of handling language diversity. During the 1950s, 14 States and nine Union Territories were created. In the 1960s, Punjab was created as a result of the agitation led by Sant Fateh Singh and Master Tara Singh, and during the 1970s the North Eastern States were created. P4

GN DEVY
Chairperson, People's Linguistic Survey of India

Reluctant Pope who fought for traditional value system



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EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

FORMER Pope Benedict XVI, who became the first pontiff of the Catholic Church to resign in over 600 years, died on Saturday in the Vatican at the age of 95.

Never wanting to be a pope, German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said it felt like a guillotine had come down on him when he was elected as the successor to John Paul II in April 2005.

"I knew I wasn't really the man for the job," he later said. Known for his conservative views, the German theologian insisted that the church stay true to its doctrine and traditions in the face of a changing world.

"In vast areas of the world today, there is a strange forgetfulness of God," he once lamented.

He soon set out on a mission to set the Church on a tradition-minded path but was distracted by a wave of scandals. The Church found itself on the defensive when an ever-growing number of victims spoke out of their abuse at the hands of priests. A report commissioned by the Church accused him of personally failing to stop the abuse of minors. Adding to Benedict's woes, his butler leaked his personal papers exposing power struggles and corruption within the Church. By then, the "reluctant pope" was contemplating an exit from papacy. He resigned on February 28, 2013 citing ill-health.

Though his staunch defence of traditional Catholic teachings on abortion and gay marriage angered liberals, for traditionalists, Benedict's era was a golden age to which they look back with nostalgia. P12

EXPRESS READ

PWD contractor hangs self at guesthouse

Tumakuru: A 53-year-old PWD contractor, TN Prasad, hanged himself at a guesthouse near Tumakuru on Friday morning. He was a resident of Saptagiri Layout. "No one is responsible for my death," read the death note. "His family has not filed any complaint stating he was under pressure from money lenders," the police said. P5

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